

JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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Back in February, 1943, as some of you will remember, we changed our appearance slightly. Again we make a change — this time a much more radical one.

With the move of the *J.N.L.* from Bethlehem to New York City it was thought that the time had come to improve its physical appearance, and to make it a little less casual in make-up. Not that there will be any attempt whatsoever to modify the informality of the style, or to alter the content. Your editor has no intention of making the *News Letter* into a literary journal. It will remain what it has always been — a potpourri of news about English and American eighteenth century scholars, of queries and comments on research problems, of little discoveries too small for the regular journals, and of information concerning unpublished manuscripts. So send us your contributions just as in the past.

A few words about the new format. Through the kind help of Dean Virginia Gildersleeve of Barnard College we are now able to use Vari-Type rather than the old style mimeographing. And to produce a short line, without the difficulties of "justifying" as with our old two-column arrangement, the smaller page was determined upon. If you dislike the new format intensely let us know. Indeed, let us hear from you anyway. We are not committed to this particular arrangement and will welcome suggestions. The heading, by the way, is temporary. We hope soon to have a specially designed masthead.

M.L.A. Programs

Eighteenth century enthusiasts can look forward to very interesting fare at the M.L.A. gathering in December. For Group VII, which meets at 9:15 Friday morning, December 28, Louis Landa has arranged the following papers in commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of Swift:

1. "Swift Today," Ricardo Quintana (Wis.).
- 2- "A Surmise Concerning the Supposed Ingratitude of Swift toward his Uncle Godwin: Together with a Modest Enquiry into the Uses

of Conjecture in Literary History," Arthur E. Case (Northwestern).

3. "Swift's Irish Tracts," Herbert Davis (Smith).

Following the papers, Autrey Nell Wiley (Texas State College, Denton, Texas) will present a report on the various exhibitions of Swift material this year. In this connection she asks that information be sent to her about any libraries, universities, or private organizations which are observing the anniversary.

Chairman Landa also announces the organization of a new Committee on Research for Group VII, the membership of which will be: Ray Frantz (Neb.), *Chairman*; R. H. Griffith (Texas); Dougald MacMillan (U. of N.C.); Moody E. Prior (Northwestern); David Worcester (Michigan State).

Group VIII, which follows Group VII, at 11 a.m. on the 28th, will have a program largely devoted to the problem of "taste." Dick Greene announces the three papers as:

1. "Some Specific Pope Criticism between 1744 and 1798," Alfred C. Ames (Ill. Inst. of Tech.).
2. "Reynolds as a Representative Critic of Taste," Walter J. Bate (Harvard).
3. "Taste and Fashion," Edward N. Hooker (U.C.L.A.).

We look forward to seeing you all at these meetings. Frankly, your editor anticipates one of the most worth-while gatherings in years.

Eighteenth Century Luncheon at Chicago

Nothing daunted by the difficult problems of food these days, our Chicago colleagues have hospitably arranged to carry on the series of luncheons for eighteenth century addicts during the M.L.A. meetings. Those who attended at Indianapolis and New York will know that the affairs are informal and very pleasant. They are designed merely to get scholars from various parts of the country together, and to introduce workers with common interests.

This year the luncheon will follow immediately the Group VIII meeting, Friday noon, December 28. The place will be the Congress Hotel, only a few blocks from the Stevens — the time, 1 p.m. The price, unfortunately, has to be fairly high (\$2.00, including gratuities), but hotels are independent these days and this is the best that can be arranged.

A notice of the luncheon, with a place to indicate your desire for a reservation, will be included with the announcement of the Annual

M.L.A. Subscription banquet. If, for any reason, you fail to receive this return card, or if you wish to be sure to have a place saved for you, write either to Arthur Friedman or Allen Hazen at the University of Chicago. These two will be in charge of the affair. Congratulations in advance to the group at Chicago University for doing such an excellent job of planning.

News from England

If one of you had ~~chanced~~ to see your editor on September 17 you would have noticed a faraway, dreamy look in his eyes. That day, more than ever before, he was longing to be across the Atlantic in Oxford, where David Nichol Smith was celebrating his seventieth birthday.

A number of accounts have come describing the festivities — the memorable dinner given by the Clarendon Press at Merton College — the exquisite food and drink — the splendid speeches — and the presentation of the volume of essays especially written for the occasion. H. W. Garrod sat at the head of the table in the Merton SCR, with Nichol Smith on his right and F. P. Wilson on his left. Wilson gave a "happily worded" speech, in which a cable was read from the American contributors; to this Nichol Smith replied in "his best manner" discussing the "course of English studies since he was an undergraduate in 1893." Without doubt, it was an occasion long to be remembered.

The presentation volume (*Essays on the Eighteenth Century*), the contents of which were listed in our last issue, was published by the Clarendon Press on September 20. Though only a few copies have so far reached this country, others should soon be available. Then you may all read a number of extremely stimulating essays — some of which may prove to be somewhat controversial. For example, do you agree with C. S. Lewis's estimate of Addison? And how will the romanticists like Geoffrey Tillotson's discussion of Matthew Arnold's criticism? Let us hear your reactions.

Johnson Birthday Celebration

P. Laithwaite writes from Lichfield that the annual birthday dinner in September was a great success. There were over a hundred guests, and many were unable to obtain tickets. A full account of the dinner will appear in the next number of *The New Rambler*.

Swift Exhibition at Cambridge

On October 18th, Cambridge University opened a special exhibition of first editions and manuscripts of Jonathan Swift in celebrating the bicentenary of his death. It was formally opened in the East Room of the Old Schools by G. M. Trevelyan, Master of Trinity College.

Harold Williams writes; "Instead of a small catalogue the Syndics have risen to printing a handsomely set octavo of, I suppose, between thirty and forty pages. This catalogue has been skillfully and judiciously compiled by Mr. John Hayward, with some collaboration on my part. We hope to place some busts and period furniture about the showcases to give the exhibition some character and appropriate setting."

Kenneth Sisam writes from Oxford that the government has just allowed the universities to ask for 3,000 of their scholarship holders from armed services, provided that they have seen three years of active service. He adds: "They should be back in October, and this will give us a good start with a nucleus of picked undergraduates. The trouble is, of course, that the college rooms, furniture, servants, books are not available to meet even that modest quota of returning activity."

Word has come through R. Van Voorhies that Lord Harmsworth has presented the Boswell Club of Chicago with a piece of the timber from the garret of the Johnson House in Gough Square to be used in making a gavel for the club. As Van Voorhies expresses it, "What a gavel to split all atomic bores and stuffed shirts!"

O. D. Savage, the Hon. Sec. of the London Johnson Society, has written your editor a personal query. As a professional journalist, he is anxious to make some connection with a newspaper or journal in our country to furnish a regular "London Letter." Can any of you suggest a way?

Morgan Library Drama Exhibition

The Morgan Library in New York has on view a comprehensive collection of first editions of plays and prints of famous actors and actresses — from the mid-sixteenth century to the late eighteenth. All of our readers, we feel sure, would enjoy this exhibition, which

was officially opened on October 20th with an address by S. C. Chew (Bryn Mawr). Chew's talk and a complete listing of the exhibits are included in an excellent printed catalogue.

News of Members

Beginning December 1st, George Sherburn will be Chairman of the Harvard English Dept.

Boylston Green has left Middlebury College to become President of Emerson College in Boston. He writes of his regret at leaving teaching, but adds that he is determined not to let the duties of administration interfere too much with his happy relationships in the Johnsonian world.

Rudolf Kirk is spending the whole of this year at the Huntington Library working on Hall's *Characters* (1608). His address will be 101 N. Irving Blvd., Los Angeles 4, Calif.

Ned McAdam writes that he does not expect to be out of the Navy before spring. He is now a Lieut. Comdr., acting as Executive Officer of the Naval Air Station at Cape May, N.J.

Dick Altick has moved from F. and M. to Ohio State Univ.; Charles Woods is now at the Univ. of Iowa; Sidney L. Gulick Jr.'s new address is Hillside Drive, Spring Valley, Calif. He is teaching at San Diego State College.

Our Pentagon Chapter in Washington is fast being broken up. Dougald MacMillan is back at Chapel Hill, and Pete Jones will very soon return to Western Reserve. Gale Noyes hopes to get out in time for the second semester at Brown, and Tom Swedenberg will be back at U.C.L.A.

Ferdinand Helm has returned from active service, and is continuing his research at Columbia on David Hartley. Ernest Mossner is just out of the service, and has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for work on Hume. Mossner's address is 360 Central Park West, New York, N. Y.

Another British Academy Prize

The Rose Mary Crawshay Prize for English Literature for the year 1945 has been awarded to Rae Blanchard (Goucher) for her editing of the *Correspondence of Richard Steele*. A thousand congratulations to one of our own members on this great honor!

English Institute

The last English Institute was held in September 1942. Now that travel conditions are rapidly improving, plans are being made to hold the fifth meeting at Columbia University, September 9-14, 1946. Because Rudolf Kirk, the Secretary, is to be in California all year, your editor has agreed to act as temporary deputy for him in arranging a program, etc. Please send on any suggestions for group topics and speakers.

Swift Exhibitions

On November 15 the Grolier Club in New York City opened a display concerned with Swift, with a talk by Herbert Davis. More of this in a later issue. At the University of Texas, Fannie Ratchford, the Librarian of the Rare Books Collection, has arranged in ten large cases an impressive set of volumes and manuscripts connected with the Dean. At the same time, Autrey Nell Wiley is about to print a booklet which will describe the Swift material in the Texas collection.

Some Recent Publications

For some time we have felt that the devoted labors of Arthur Friedman and Louis Landa in compiling each year the annual bibliography for *PQ* ought to receive more general public thanks. Their work is indispensable to every research worker in our field, and yet many of us merely accept their contribution without a thought. With the appearance, then, of the 1944 list, let us express our deep thanks and appreciation in as voluble a way as possible.

We might mention again the *Texas Studies in English*, which has now appeared — a valuable mine of scholarly information. An important study of "The Critical Theory of Lord Kames" by Helen Randall, which some of you may not have seen, appears in the *Smith College Studies*, XXII, Nos. 1-4. W. S. Lewis's "Searching for Manuscripts" in the September *Atlantic* is a delightful story of detective search for Walpole's letters.

R. D. Havens suggests that we mention two recent novels having to do with the eighteenth century: *Gin and Bitters* by Jane Lane; and *Folly Bridge* by D. L. Murray. Tom Warton appears as a principal character in *Folly Bridge*.

Johnsonian Apocrypha

One of the major problems faced by every Johnsonian is the wealth of anecdote about the Doctor for which there is no, or insufficient, authority. How many times have you been "stumped" by some ingenious friend who blithely quotes something attributed to Dr. Johnson and then asks you for the reference? You rack your brain, mumble that it sounds familiar, but add that you don't believe it is in Boswell. And your face turns a deep red.

Since the appearance of J. W. Krutch's recent life of Johnson, he has been deluged with anecdotes and queries of this sort. In desperation he has suggested that we start a collection of Johnsonian Apocrypha — not to perpetuate the errors, but to ascertain just what has authority and what has not.

Some of the old chestnuts, such as the distinction between "surprise" and "astonish," and between "smell" and "stink," obviously represent mere lexicographer motifs (Or can you provide a more specific origin?). Other stories which continually crop up are even more difficult to trace.

At the risk of exposing his own ignorance, your editor passes on a few samples. What is the authority for the story about Johnson's eating a hot potato (or hot soup) and spitting it out? When someone took him to task for the ill manners, Johnson exploded: "a fool would have swallowed it."

Then there is the story of some revellers who called on Johnson to ask him to make a pun. He insisted he could make one on any subject; whereupon they named the King. Johnson shut the window as he said; "The King is not a subject."

Send us the Johnsonian stories you can't place, and we will gradually compile an anthology. If we collect most of the standard anecdotes we may be able to provide armor to withstand future attacks by the apocrypha quoters.

A Request

L. H. Butterfield (F. & M.) writes that he is to be free from teaching duties for six months to work in various libraries, chiefly eastern, on a project which he describes as follows:

I am locating the unpublished letters of Dr. Benjamin Rush (1745/46-1813) with a view to editing a comprehensive selection of them. Rush was a physician, a teacher, for a time a politician,

a writer on education, morals, religion, psychology, and innumerable other topics, an inveterate supporter of humanitarian causes in the young Republic, and an acute observer of human nature in action, as Professor Osgood pointed out in his article, "An American Boswell," recently noticed in the *JNL*. His letters, relatively few of which have been published, throw light on the most diverse topics and personalities in this country and abroad, for he knew almost everyone of consequence here and had received his medical training in Edinburgh, London, and Paris. Unfortunately he did not keep copies of letters he wrote, and they are very widely scattered. Since he was a "Signer," many individual letters are in private hands and in small public collections such as historical societies and college libraries. Locating his letters with any degree of completeness is therefore a task of some magnitude, and I beg to solicit help from readers of the *JNL*. Are there Rush letters in their own libraries, or are there libraries in their vicinity that would be worth inquiring of? I am especially anxious to learn the locations of Rush letters in the United Kingdom, for to judge from his personal papers, Rush had a number of English and Scottish correspondents.

Readers will be glad to know that Rush's fine manuscript autobiography and commonplace book, now owned by the American Philosophical Society and described by Professor Osgood, are well on their way toward publication. Dr. George W. Corner of the Carnegie Institution of Washington is editing them for the Society. Though their interest is largely American, they contain some lively glimpses of London literary and political — especially "republican" — society in the 1780's.

A Comment

T. O. Mabbott (Hunter) writes: "Ernest Bernbaum's fine remark about a romantic admiring Pope struck an answering chord in me. I have heard a lot about essential differences between the poetry of Pope and Coleridge, but I have never been able to see any difference that I thought essential. In fact I am sure that what they have in common is what counts, and that is the essentially poetic quality. It is not just that I think 'The Eve of St. Mark' by Keats, and Pope's 'Elgy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady' great poems — I think they have the same quality of greatness, and differ only in manner, which is not essential.

"I never could get my favorite teacher to agree with me on that point. But I recently noticed that Edgar Poe seems to have felt the same way about it. In a criticism of 1836, he said he would illustrate what 'is not Ideality or the Poetic Power, by an example of what is.' He adds a footnote. 'As examples of purest ideality we would cite....' (He gives a list of eleven works)." The 'Inferno,' 'Comus,' 'Kubla Khan,' 'The Nightingale' of Keats are in the list; and with them are 'The Rape of the Lock' and 'Tam O'Shanter' (This last surprisingly, for Poe elsewhere said he cared little for Burns).

"I do not insist that one admire every kind of poetry, but I do protest against those who set up personal standards to which they think a poem must conform, unless it be a standard to which such varied things as the 'Labuntur anni' of Horace, the best of the 'Spoon River Anthology,' the 'Resolution and Independence' of Wordsworth, and the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' obviously do conform."

Johnson Psychoanalyzed

We cannot resist calling attention to the latest "analysis" of Samuel Johnson's character, appearing in the *Psychoanalytic Review* for April, 1945. Here we meet again that involved terminology which so fascinates the uninitiated. Thus Johnson the tea-drinker and hearty eater is described by Dr. Hitschmann in terms of "oral destiny." Johnson's tendency towards melancholy and his strange convulsions are easily determined by the early effects of childhood "trauma," "narcissism," "father identification" and sundry types of eroticism.

Calling upon the "Ego-ideal," compensation and sublimation, compulsion and identification, the author is never at a loss to explain away even the most baffling of Johnson's idiosyncrasies and contradictions. The picture of his character in bald psychoanalytic terms is not charming, but his admirers may be put at ease when they realize that his general attractiveness is accounted for well enough since he was not only kind and generous but also "bisexual and an ungratified neurotic too, with free-floating libido."

The material furnished by Johnson to the analyst is, of course, limitless, and he played into their hands more than once with his own confessions. The present author even compares Johnson to the great Freud himself.

Hitschmann, to quote him exactly, finds Johnson very easy to understand: "an individual with partly inborn and partly conditioned

invincible instincts -- oral and anal aggression -- develops also an aggressive, very severe Superego: a life-long fight between the instincts and the conscience is the consequence, a compulsive neurosis with tic and attacks of depressions originates."

Fugacity Again

Bill Wimsatt (Yale) writes:

Modern science in "re-inventing" the Johnsonian hard word "fugacity" (*JNL*, August, 1945) was re-inventing a word which Johnson himself took from seventeenth-century empirical science. Johnson's *Dictionary* reads as follows:

FUGACITY. *n.s.* [*fugax*, Latin].

1. Volatility; quality of flying away.

Spirits and salts, which by their *fugacity*, colour, smell, taste, and divers experiments that I purposely made to examine them, were like the salt and spirit of urine and soot. Boyle [*i.e.*, *Experiments...about the Producibleness of Chymical Principles*, Part I, Sect. ii, in *Works* (London, 1772), I, 598].

2. Uncertainty; instability.

Johnson does not illustrate meaning 2., but in *Rambler* 143 he speaks of "the fugacity of pleasure," and he may be the first to use the word in a metaphorical or literary sense. Boyle's *Producibleness of Chymical Principles* appeared in 1680. The *O. E. D.* quotes "fugacity" from Boyle's *The Origine of Formes and Qualities*, 1683, and before that only the definition in Blount's *Glossographia*.

I am engaged in a study of the "philosophic" words in Johnson's *Rambler* and will welcome suggestions and information.

An 1820 View of Today

In May, 1820, Mrs. Piozzi wrote to her daughter Susan: "Indeed if Cannons can be fired by the Sun, Packets propelled by Steam across the Channel; Women's Work done without hands, and Carriages driven along the Road without horses; Men and Beasts must of necessity become Superfluous, and the Sooner they destroy each other the better."

Handwriting and Forgery

More and more, skill in the analysis of handwriting and the ability to recognize forgery are becoming requisites for much advanced literary research. For only today are we becoming aware of how widespread has been the faking of evidence upon which rest many of our most cherished opinions.

While the research itself falls outside our field, the controversial analysis of Shelley's handwriting, etc., contained in *The Shelley Legend*, by R. M. Smith (Lehigh), T. G. Ehrsam, Martha Schlegel, and L. A. Waters, should be examined by all of us. Here is a sample of the kind of a problem which may appear at any time in our own work. After reading the volume, many of you may seriously ask: "How definite is our knowledge of the variations in handwriting?" "Can we ever be scientifically sure of forgery?" "Is there any way to make our decisions foolproof?" Certainly here is a topic which needs much discussion and clarification. Let us have your comments.

Auction Sales

In recent Parke-Bernet sales there have not been many eighteenth century items of great interest for scholars. The following, however, may be listed: Oct. 29-30 — Horace Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales* with an inscription in his hand, and his *Anecdotes of Painting*, extra-illustrated and with his manuscript insertion. Nov. 19-20 — a splendid copy of Gray's *Elegy* and two copies of the Kilmarnock Burns; among the autographs some choice Burns items, chiefly the manuscript of the ballad "Geordie" and a letter from Robert to his brother Gilbert, written a few days before the poet's death. Nov. 26-27 — the J. H. Pershing library, from Denver, Colorado, including first editions of celebrated English authors, chiefly in the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries,

Swiftiana

Jim Tobin tells us that the printer has promised to have the Bibliography of Twentieth Century Swift Studies, which Tobin and Louis Landa have prepared, ready by Christmas.

